

Main Menu

Donate

Newspaper

Archives

Meetings,

Notices &

Events

Home

What's

New

Research

Culture

Places

**Get
Involved**

About Us

**Allegany
History
Photo
Gallery**

County History

Allegany - The Name

Category: [**History of Allegany County NY**](#)

NOTE: In New York State, the correct spelling of the County name is ALLEGANY. Rivers, mountains, towns and counties in other states may be spelled differently! Please know we are proud of our County and of the correct spelling! rt

"THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME.

Indian tradition attributes this Aboriginal name, which has so strongly fastened itself upon various places and geographical features of America, notably the Alleghany Mountains, Allegheny City, Allegheny River (Penn.), Allegany River and Allegany County (N. Y.), to an ancient race of Indians called Talegi, Talligewi, or Allegewi. This nation was a very warlike one and spread itself over the country east of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, but, after long and bloody wars, it was overpowered and driven south by a confederacy of tribes whose descendants are the Iroquois and Algonquin nations of to-day. This ancient people is conjectured by some to be the early Appalachian Indians, whom De Soto found in 1539 in Florida and the territory of the Gulf States. Schoolcraft says, " They were numerous, fierce and valorous*

They were clothed in skins of wild beasts. They used bows and arrows, clubs and spears. They did not poison their darts. They were temperate, drinking only water. They did not make wars on slight pretences, or for avarice, but to repress attacks, or remedy injustice. They treated their prisoners with humanity and like persons of their own households. They were long-lived, some reaching a hundred years. They worshipped the sun, to which they sang hymns morning and evening. Washington Irving deemed the name Appalachia or Allegania as the fit name for this continent.

Rev. P. J. Wilson of St. Bonaventure's Seminary and College at Allegany, N. Y., kindly sends the following: " The Indian name for Allegany is a compound word., Talegwi-henna or Talegwi-hanna. Let us see first what Talegwi means. The chronicles of the Algonquians state that the Lenape migrated eastward from the far west. When they reached the Mississippi they found the country east of it inhabited by a people called Talegi, Talligewi or Allegewi. Therefore, to the Algonquins Talegwi or Allegewi meant the country and people-east of the Mississippi, the country to which they emigrated from afar. The next part of the compound Is Henna or Hanna. It means river. Hence Tallegwe-henna or Tellegwi-hanna, the Indian name for Allegany, means the river of the country of the Talligewi—The river of the country to which they immigrated. At first the name was given to the Ohio. After the Lenape reached it they called it Talegahonah. The Iroquois changed this to Ohio, a word from their own language. But the Ohio's chief tributary still retains the name— Talegwi-hanna, Allegewi-Hanna, Alleghany. The Alleghany mountains for a similar reason were called Talega-chukang."

The Publishers."

("Allegany County & It's People; A Centennial Memorial History of Allegany County, NY; John S. Minard, Esq., County

Historian; President, Allegany County Historical Society. 1896.")

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Towns and Villages

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- Allen
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- Almond
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- Andover
- Angelica
- Belfast
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- Bolivar
- Burns
- Caneadea
- Centerville
- Clarksville
- Cuba
- Friendship
- Genesee
- Granger
- Grove
- Hume
- Independence
- New Hudson
- Rushford
- Scio
- Ward
- Wellsville
- West Almond
- Willing
- Wirt
- Surrounding Areas